



## CITY OF LODI COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

J-1

**AGENDA TITLE:** Receive Report Concerning Downtown Directional Sign Program and Provide Direction and Action as Appropriate

**MEETING DATE:** March 17, 2010

**PREPARED BY:** City Manager

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Receive report concerning downtown directional sign program and provide direction and action as appropriate.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** One of the actions stemming from the October 16, 2009 Downtown Summit was consideration of a directional sign program to guide visitors to Downtown Lodi. Attendees at the Downtown Summit received a presentation by directional sign expert Simon Andrews on the use of directional signs as an economic development tool. When breakout groups were asked to prioritize tasks for downtown development, it was unanimous that a directional sign program should be a priority.

Over \$15 million has been invested in public improvements downtown. Lodi has successfully worked to make downtown vibrant and has adopted policies to encourage its development. California's leading urban planning publication the *California Planning and Development Report* named Downtown Lodi one of the best small-city downtowns in California ([www.cp-dr.com/node/1934](http://www.cp-dr.com/node/1934); Bill Fulton, Publisher). Yet, downtown is difficult to find. It is not located near a major highway and is hard for a first-time visitor to find. Consequentially, an unknown number of tourists who come to Lodi as a result of the investment of resources in tourism, promotion, and wine tourism never find downtown. A directional sign program would help bring these tourists downtown.

A directional sign program (also known as a Way-Finding Sign System) typically consists of design, placement, construction, and maintenance. It is a common economic development tool. In order to provide background, representatives from the City of Merced have agreed to share their experience with developing a directional sign program and will offer a short presentation at the Council Meeting.

In addition to Merced, staff has reviewed other cities' directional sign program. In January, the City of Tracy approved a contract with a consultant to develop a "multi-level signage/wayfinding system". Tracy's contract for professional services was a not to exceed amount of \$75,000 and the Council appropriated another \$360,000 for sign fabrication and installation.

The cost and resources for a sign program may be the key issue at this time. Although the amount that Tracy plans to spend for its directional sign program seems to be on the high side, a reasonably safe expectation is that this program could cost from \$100,000 and more. Some cities, such as the City of Cerritos, have developed their sign program to promote specific businesses and have asked these businesses to fund the program. The City of Santa Clarita used Business Improvement District funds. Some cities have used redevelopment funds, and a few have used general funds.

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APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

Blair King, City Manager

Upon receiving the presentation, the Council should provide a general indication of its desire to proceed and a general approach to funding. The following alternative steps could be taken:

- 1) Direct staff to research funding alternatives, including, but not limited to expanded Business Improvement District funding, shared costs with specific businesses, shared costs with organizations, and Art In Public Places funding.
- 2) Consider working with an established group to develop a downtown directional sign program such as the DLBP or Conference and Visitors Bureau, or form an ad-hoc committee, or have staff further refine the program.
- 3) Solicit for professional services to design and place the signs
- 4) Execute the program.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The working assumption is Downtown Lodi is hard for the out-of-town tourist to find. The **loss** of revenue and the negative financial impact has not been quantified.

The cost of a directional sign program could range from approximately \$100,000 to \$150,000. There are possible funding sources but none are firm.

In the long term, a sign program will direct visitors to Downtown Lodi and increase economic activity and vitality.

  
Blair King, City Manager

# Downtown Directional Sign Program

Lodi City Council  
March 17, 2010

# Downtown Directional Sign Program

October 2009 Downtown Summit:

Five of five breakout groups said downtown directional signs should be the highest priority for the development of Downtown Lodi

# Downtown Directional Sign Program

- Lodi is committed to making Downtown vibrant
- Lodi has invested more than \$15 million in Downtown
- Downtown Lodi is not located near a major thoroughfare
- Downtown Lodi is difficult to find

# Downtown Directional Sign Program



# Downtown Directional Sign Program

## Solution

Directional signs/way-finding sign system

# Downtown Directional Sign Program

- Design
- Placement
- Construction
- Maintenance
- Common economic development tool



# Downtown Directional Sign Program

One City Case Study  
City of Merced

Presentation

City of Merced Assistant City Manager Bill Cahill

# Downtown Directional Sign Program

## Where do we go from here?

- Take no action at this time.

Or,

- Direct staff to research funding alternatives –  
Assumption: General Fund not available.
- Solicit comments and input from Downtown property owners, businesses, City committees and civic groups
- Return to Council with recommendations.

# City of Merced Wayfinding Sign Program

Total cost: about \$132,000

About 75 signs throughout the community  
(citywide)

Establishes new identity and coherent  
image



# How Merced's Project Worked

- Policy foundation: Economic Development Strategy
- Professional services acquired through RFP
- Small committee established
- Design concept approved by Council
- Construction contracted out to separate vendor
- City staff performed project management



# Tasks

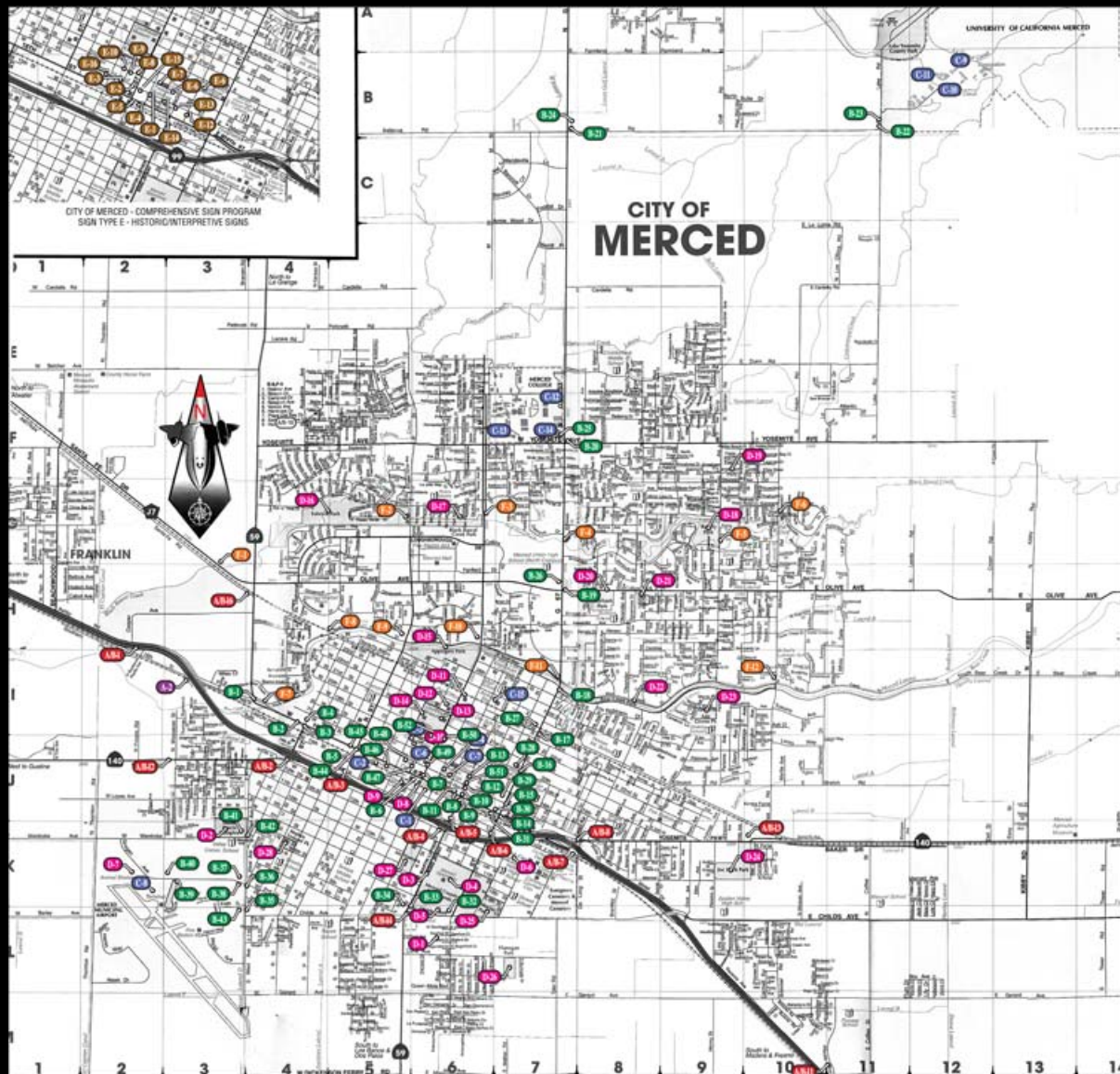
Establish destinations  
and routes

Create a design concept

Create actual plans  
and specs

Construct

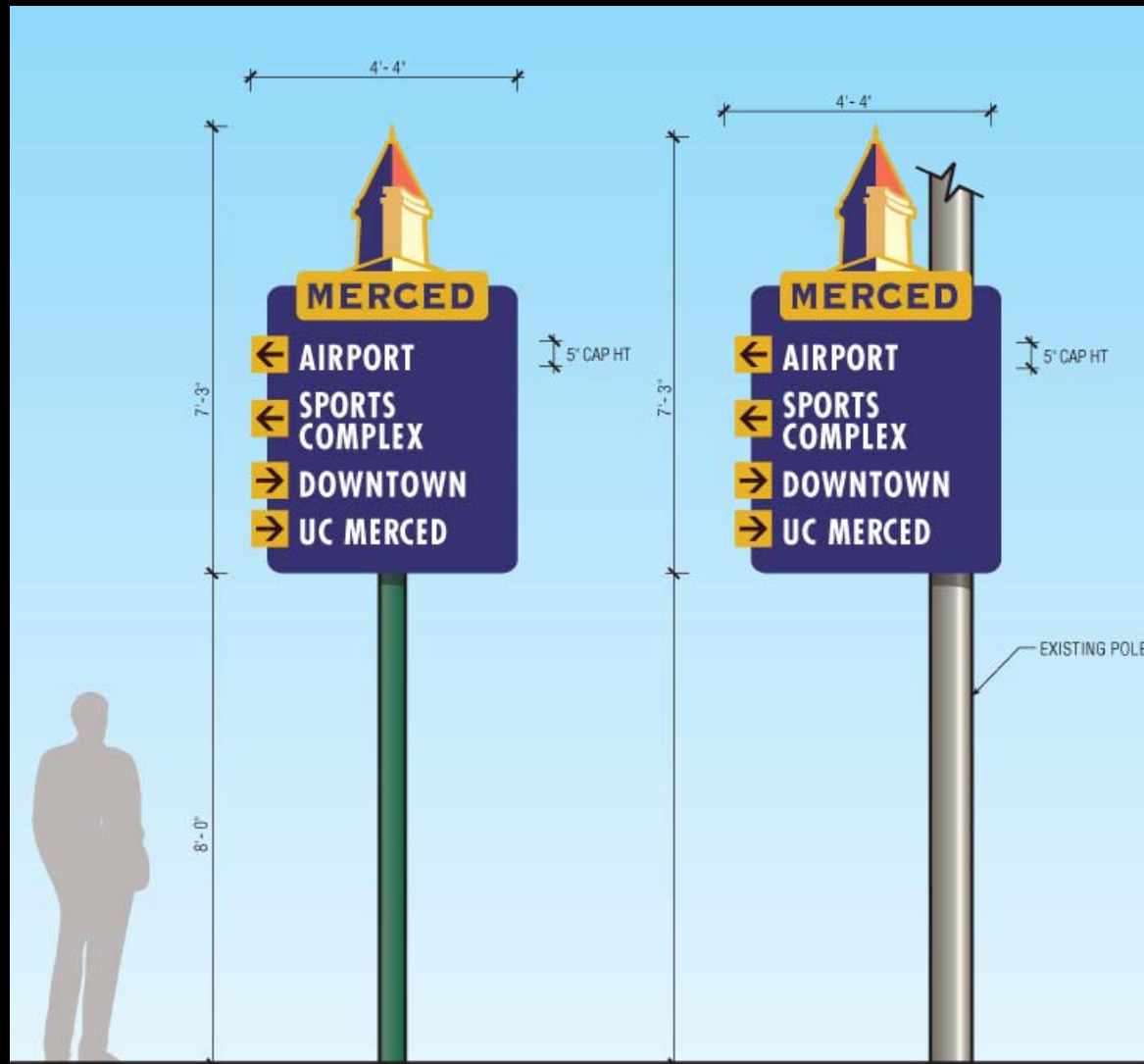




City of Merced Merced, CA









City of Merced *Merced, CA*







City of Merced *Merced, CA*



# Lessons

Use a professional

Be aware of sign placement (jurisdiction)

Have a reasonable committee, if any

Impose some limits

